

**Character Reference Letter**

Sara S. Mahood  


The Honorable Stephanie A. Gallagher  
United States District Court  
C/O Office of the Federal Public Defender  
100 South Charles Street  
Tower II, 9th Floor  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

July 21, 2025

Dear Judge Gallagher,

My name is Sara Mahood. I retired from the Department of Defense in 2019 and live with my husband David Hampton in Annapolis, Maryland.

I worked as a senior program manager in the same organization as Mark Unkenholz for approximately fifteen years. During that time Mark was the Technical Director of the whole organization and was invaluable to the mission. Like many others in the organization I got to know and depend upon Mark professionally for his expertise and wisdom on how to navigate meetings with government and industry leaders. He was a great sounding board for my program team to ask questions and work through challenges. It was a daily occurrence to hear a program manager say "let's run this by Mark to see what he thinks". Mark made it part of his daily routine to get out of the C-suite and circle the building visiting program managers and technical personnel giving them a chance to share issues and updates. Noting that other senior leadership rarely did this walkabout.

Over the many years I worked in this organization the senior managers changed regularly, but Mark as the technical director was a constant. He was also trusted counsel for new leadership knowing the organizational history and issues. The organization has always had its challenges operating on the front line with advances in security technology outpacing government solutions. Often the issue and solution were not crystal clear, but fell more in the grey areas which made it all the more challenging to navigate and required Mark's talent and creativity. Mark's ability to stay within the lines, achieve success and accomplish the mission was well recognized, respected and sought after by government leadership.

He was a good listener with excellent communication skills providing great insight. His dedication and commitment to advance the mission was relentless. Mark was very dependable and had a strong work ethic because he loved the work. Working long hours focused on the mission he rarely took vacation, donating his leave to the agency's leave bank to help others. His knowledge and expertise in math, security, and cryptography were highly respected by leaders in government, industry and academia alike. He was thoughtful, pragmatic, and cautious to help develop solutions that addressed a wide range of issues, helping protect our nation.

To say the impact of this prosecution is very upsetting to Mark and his family would be a gross understatement. Mark has devoted his life to the Department of Defense and its mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sara S. Mahood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sara" and last name "Mahood" clearly legible.

Sara S. Mahood